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FOREWORD



Thanks for downloading this FREE interactive travel guide. You've made an excellent choice if you plan on **GETTING OFF THE BEATEN TRACK** in THAILAND. Before you delve into the content of this travel guide, please take a few minutes to read this foreword. It outlines how to make the best use of the information contained within.

First-hand experience: This travel guide has been put together using first-hand experience gained from traveling to, and exploring, all the locations presented within. The information and photos featured in my travel guides, have been collated over years of putting boots on the ground. There is no second-hand information, or information which is plagiarized from other travel sources, within this guide. Every cave, waterfall, river, viewpoint, jungle trail, temple site, guesthouse and restaurant presented, or promoted, I have been to and seen and/or experienced myself.

Getting off the beaten track: The primary focus of my travel guides is **ADVENTURE TRAVEL** (and activities) to locations which are non-mainstream tourist destinations. As an example, there is no information for the mainstream tourist locations of Cambodia (except as transit hub's before heading off to a more remote location) listed in this travel guide. As such, the information in this guide is directed towards travelers (not tourists) who are keen

for a bit of adventure - caving, climbing, jungle trekking, kayaking - in an off the beaten track location, of South East Asia. If these types of activities aren't to your liking, then this travel guide won't be much use to you. There's no information in here about the party towns in South East Asia.

Budget travel: Knowing the importance of making the most of your hard-earned currency, my travel links ([12GO ASIA](#)) and accommodation links ([AGODA](#)) are predominantly budget oriented. They provide a range of options for getting to a central hub, or base, from which you can make your daily explorations.

Independent sightseeing: Instead of going on group tours, I strongly promote the idea of renting your own vehicle (car or motorbike) and venturing out yourself. To help you get to the exact location, there's always a [GOOGLE MAPS](#) link to show the route from a hub (hotel or guesthouse) to the sightseeing attraction. If there's a local tour operator offering excellent adventure type tours, or activities, I'll provide links to their website. A good example of a great adventure tour operator is [GREEN DISCOVERY LAOS](#), who offer excellent caving, kayaking and trekking tours throughout Laos.

The Table of Contents: This is page four of the travel guide and has a sequential list of sections, which you can go to directly by clicking on the **GREEN** numbered tab.

YouTube Links: These take you directly to my YouTube Vlog ([Megaworld Asia](#)) where you can see short, high quality travel videos of the numerous attractions listed in my travel guides. If you enjoy the videos, please hit the like button and don't forget to subscribe to see my upcoming adventures.

Your next adventure is just one click away

Safe travels,

MEGA

Angkor Archaeological Park

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How To Use This Interactive Travel Guide

The Table Of Contents: To effortlessly move from the TOC to the page you want to view, simply click on the **page number**: 

YouTube Links: These will take you to a short highlights video, of the sightseeing attraction, in the section you're looking at:



Other Links: These take you to ancillary services such as recommended restaurants, or car and motorbike rental agencies, in the location you're traveling to:

ANCILLARY SERVICES

Travel Links: This takes you to **12GO ASIA**, an excellent travel group which provides a range of options for getting around the region:



The Table Of Contents: To move back to the TOC, click on the **yellow arrows**, at the bottom of each Page: 

Google Maps Links: These provide a route from a designated location (e.g., a hotel) to a particular sightseeing attraction:



Information Links: These links take you to information sites, such as Wikipedia or Wiki-voyage, to provide more in-depth info on a particular subject or location:



Accommodation Links: This takes you to the Agoda website to check accommodation availability and make bookings:



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ANGKOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL PARK - GENERAL INFORMATION

ABOUT: The Angkor Archaeological Park, located in Siem Reap, Cambodia, encompasses a number of impressive Khmer Temple sites and is perhaps the world's largest concentration of historical structures, dating back 1000 years or more. **For more in-depth information, click the link below:**

WIKIPEDIA

Note: The site of ANGKOR WAT is just one of the many magnificent structures in the Angkor Archaeological Park. There are many other structures surrounding this central feature and while not as big, are no less impressive in terms of architecture and artwork.

Siem Reap: The nearby city of Siem Reap provides the tourist infrastructure for the many tourists and travellers, wanting to see the magnificent structures of Angkor. The town centre is approximately 6 km from entry point to Angkor Archaeological Park. The majority of visitors will use this as their base and travel out to the various sites of Angkor, each day (normally on a rented motorbike or tuk-tuk).



The Bayon

Many Sites: The thing to keep in mind when planning your trip to Angkor is there 's many sites to occupy your sightseeing hours. Some, such as the BAYON, are so impressive that you make want to make more than one visitation.

Allow Enough Time: The mistake many first time visitors to Angkor make, is not allowing enough time to have an unrushed look at all the magnificent sites in the park. From my own experience, a 5 - 7 day stay is sufficient for an excellent sightseeing experience at the Archaeological Park.



Angkor Wat

SIEM REAP - GENERAL INFORMATION

Getting There: There is multiple travel options for getting to the nearby city of SIEM REAP. This includes air travel, buses, and minivan transportation. Siem Reap has an airport and there are many daily flights from nearby regional centres. There is also regular bus services for those travelling up from Phnom Penh. **Click the link below to see your travel options from Bangkok to Siem Reap:**



Click the link below to see your travel options from HCMC to Siem Reap:



Click the link below for bus service options from Phnom Penh to Siem Reap:



SIEM REAP - GENERAL INFORMATION

Mid-range accommodation: For a bit more comfort and nice size, air-conditioned rooms the SIDEWALK HOTEL, on Taphul Road is an excellent choice for your stay in Siem Reap. The hotel has a small swimming pool and is located only 800 meters from the town center. Room rates are approximately 15 - 18 USD per night. **Click the following link for booking inquiries:**



Budget accommodation: An excellent budget accommodation option in Siem Reap is the REVOLUTION HOSTEL, on Street 26. The hostel is popular with backpackers and the younger traveler and has a swimming pool, a great bar area, and a friendly atmosphere. Room rates are approximately 12 USD per night. **Click the following link for booking inquiries:**



Where to Eat: If you're staying at the Sidewalk Hotel, there's some great local restaurants and cafés within walking distance. For an excellent western breakfast check out the SOURCE CAFÉ - located approximately 100 meters south of the Sidewalk Hotel. Their juices and smoothies are fantastic, and the source (big) breakfast has their signature homemade hash browns. For a good, inexpensive coffee, try the FAME CAFÉ - located across the road from the Source. **Click the following link for the location of the Source:**



SIEM REAP - GENERAL INFORMATION

Transportation: Due to the size and spread of the temple sites, transportation is a definite requirement for sightseeing excursions. If you've got a motorbike license, hiring a scooter (such as a Honda 125 cc) is a cheap and reliable option for getting about. These can be rented for 8 - 10 USD per day, from any of the motorbike shops around the town center. However, you will be required to leave your passport as security for the duration of the rental contract.

Tuk-tuks: If you don't have a motorbike license, or you're not confident about riding around on the hectic streets, the only other viable means of transportation is the local tuk-tuks. These are basically a two-wheeled carriage, with open sides and a roof, secured to a motorbike. However, using one of these to get around is a bit more expensive than renting a motorbike. Hire rates for an outing to a temple site (on a tuk-tuk) are approximately US 15 dollars, and time is normally limited to half a day.

Guides: Most of the tuk-tuk drivers are knowledgeable about the temple sites around Siem Reap. However, they are not government approved guides. If you need a guide, you'll need to pay extra for this service.

Angkor Pass: Before heading off on your temple sightseeing trips you'll first need to purchase an ANGKOR PASS. This comes in 1 day, 3 day and 7 day issues and can be purchased at the Angkor Park Pass Ticket Counter. **Click the link below for directions from the Side Walk Hotel:**



Prices: As of October 2022, Angkor Pass prices are as follows:

- 1 day pass = US 37 dollars
- 3 day pass = US 62 dollars
- 7 day pass = US 72 dollars

If you purchase the ticket after 5 PM, the pass does not start until the following day. An Angkor Pass purchased before 5 PM will activate on that day. If you purchase it late in the afternoon you'll effectively lose a day of your pass because most of the best temple sites close at 6.00 PM. The Angkor Pass can also be bought on-line but is significantly more expensive. **Note:** The Angkor Pass, providing it's in-date, can be used for entry into any of the temple sites outside Siem Reap City. E.g., Bantay Srey, Kbal Spean, Beng Mealea and some sites in the Phnom Kulen National Park.



Tuk-tuk service



ANGKOR WAT SIGHTSEEING

Angkor Wat: Is arguably the most impressive temple site in the Angkor Archaeological Park. However, I would qualify that by saying the Bayon and the Ta Prohm are in some ways more interesting. The Angkor Wat site is also the biggest single temple complex and is surrounded by a huge outer moat (Barray). The main entry point, to the inner grounds, is across the floating walkway on the western side of the complex. **Click the link below for directions from the Side Walk Hotel:**



The Inner Grounds: Once inside the outer walls there's an elevated stone walkway leading to the inner temple entrance. On the way you'll see two large ponds (the north and south reflection ponds) which attract a large number of sightseers at around 5 AM for the sunrise over the inner temple.

Note: There is also some nice reflections over the two ponds later in the afternoon as the sun is setting - approximately 5.30 PM



The Inner Temple

The Inner Temple: The main feature of Angkor Wat is the inner, central temple. To access it you need to climb a rather steep set of stairs. At the top there's some narrow corridors which run around the internal perimeter of the structure.

Note: Be aware that this inner sanctum of the temple closes at 5.00 PM. So you need to get there by 4.00 PM at the latest, to get enough time for a decent look at the place.



The Inner Grounds & Southern Pond

ANGKOR WAT SUNRISE TOUR

Angkor Wat Sunrise: The big ticket item for most people going to Angkor Wat is the sunrise over the inner ponds. If you want to get some good shots you'll need to be there by 5.00 AM at the latest to get a front position along the edge of the pond; earlier is even better. **Click the link below for the correct location for the Angkor Wat Sunrise:**



Photography: If you're a serious photographer (you'll be using a tripod for time exposure shots) you'll want to get there at 4.00 AM for a position along the edge of the bank, where it drops down to the pond; or for an even lower perspective, on the sand which is at the water's edge. The first time I went for the dawn and sunrise shots, I got there at 4.15 AM and there was already a number of photography groups taking up the best spots.

Lighting: Don't forget to take a headlamp with you for setting up your camera gear in the dark, as there's no illumination around the grounds. By 5.30 AM the whole area around



the southern Pond will be completely packed out and if you leave your position, someone else will quickly move into it.

The Eastern Side: Once the sun's up and the crowd starts dispersing, an excellent place for some morning light photography (before 9 AM) is the eastern side of the structure. It's only a 300 meter walk from the northern pond. After getting a few shots there, you can go straight into the inner temple area before the crowd's arrive.



ANGKOR WAT - PHOTOS & VIDEO



Click the link to the right to see video highlights of ANGKOR WAT:



ANGKOR THOM - COMBINATION TOUR

Angkor Thom: This is the largest multi-temple complex at the Angkor Archaeological Park. Where it differs from Angkor Wat is having a number of significant temple sites within its extensive perimeter walls. There is five entry gates into this complex; the primary one being the South gate. Within its walls is the magnificent BAYON, THE BAPHUON TEMPLE, THE TERRANCE OF ELEPHANTS, and THE PHIMEANAKAS. There are a number of additional smaller sites within the grounds but the above-mentioned are the most impressive.

Note: The BAYON and the upper levels of the BAPHUON have set viewing hours: 7.30 am to 5.30 pm.

The Combination Tour: This is a suggested route if you want to see four different sites, within the Angkor Thom Complex, and aren't pushed for time. The tour starts at the southern end of the TERRACE OF ELEPHANTS, then goes to BAPHUON, the PHIMEANAKAS, the TERRACE OF THE LEPER KING, and finally the ELEPHANT TERRACE.

Parking: If you have a motorbike, there is a secure parking area on the northern side of the BAYON. Parking here also gives you the option of seeing the BAYON.



End Point - Elephant Terrace

Tour time: To do this tour without feeling rushed allow at least four hours, and start earlier in the day to beat the heat. It's probably a good idea to start the by 9 am.

Note: Although there's plenty of shade from surrounding trees at the Phimeanakas and Baphuon, the final stop on this tour - the Elephant Terrace - is fully exposed to the sun. **Click the link below for directions to the Baphuon start point:**



The Baphuon - The start point

THE BAPHUON - ANGKOR THOM COMPLEX

About: This is a large temple structure, built in the mid-11th century. It is a three-tiered temple mountain built as the state temple of King Udayadityavarman II and dedicated to the Hindu God Shiva. It is the archetype of the Baphuon style with intricate carvings covering every available surface. The temple adjoins the southern enclosure of the royal palace and measures 120 meters east-west by 100 meters north-south at its base and stands 34 meters tall. **Click the link below for more in-depth info:**

WIKIPEDIA

Access: This temple tends to be less visited than the other more popular sites in the area (e.g., the Bayon), possibly because getting to the entry point involves quite a long walk from the roadway. The direction of visit starts from the southern end of the Terrace of elephants. To keep you going on the correct path, there is directional signage showing the way to go. **Note:** The directional signage includes arrows and "the way of visit." There is also entry and exit point markers.



Eastern Gate: The approach to the eastern gate of the Baphuon has a long, elevated walkway, through a picturesque surrounding landscape, with a small Baray (pond) on the left side. During the rainy season there will be plenty of water about on ground, and the surrounding landscape will be green and vibrant. The walk to the eastern gate is like a stroll through a very scenic park. As you get closer to the outer wall of the Baphuon, the size of the structure becomes very impressive.



THE BAPHUON - ANGKOR THOM COMPLEX

The Second Level: Entry at the eastern gate takes you up a steep stairway to the second level of the structure. Once up there, you get an appreciation of the sheer size of the temple. The primary feature of the second level is a large structure in the center of the flat open expanse. There is a walkway around the outer edge of the second level. The walkway does a complete circuit. However, to ascend to the third level you will need to go to the southern side of the walkway. As with all Khmer structures, all sides (walls) are aligned to the points of the compass and gates, or entry points, are always at the center of each wall.

The Third Level: As mentioned, to get up to the third level you'll need to take the stairway on the southern side of the structure. The stairway is quite steep so it's advisable to hold the handrails as you climb up. The stairway takes you up to the top of the second level structure and provides excellent views back along the eastern approach. There's also a walkway around the outer edge of the third level which goes through tunnels



formed by the stonework. **Note:** there's also a stairway on the western side of the second level structure, but it's designated as the exit stairway. There's also a third level structure but access to the top is blocked, due to the unstable stonework.

Moving to the Phimeanakas: The next stop after the Baphuon is the PHIMEANAKAS. **Click the link below for directions:**



THE BAPHUON - PHOTOS



THE PHIMEANAKAS - ANGKOR THOM COMPLEX

About: The Phimeanakas is a smaller pyramid styled construction, approximately 300 meters north of the Baphuon. To get there, take the trail which leads north out of Baphuon. This trail is well marked and has signage which has "way of visit." This trail takes you through a heavily forested area with stairways) into park like area, surrounded by an outer wall, with a large pond on the northern side of the Phimeanakas temple. This structure, like the Baphuon, tend to get missed by the majority of sightseers, so you may find you're there alone.

Ascending the Structure: This is entirely possible as there's a stairway up to the top platform, on each side of the structure. However, if you're considering making the ascent, due care is advised as many of the steps are eroded and slipping is a definite possibility.

At the Top: Once you arrive at the top you'll have a nice view of the surrounding landscape. You'll also see quite a few large stone blocks, from the perimeter wall, lying about on the platform. At the center of the top platform is another structure (a Hindu temple) which also



The large pond

has a stairway to the top. For those confident in their climbing skills, an ascent to the top of the temple will provide even better views of the surrounding area. **Note:** If you're at this site in the monsoon season, don't be surprised to see deep pools of water around the base of the structure. The next stop on the trail is the ELEPHANT TERRACE. **Click the link below for directions:**



The Phimeanakas

THE ELEPHANT TERRACE - ANGKOR THOM COMPLEX

About: The Elephant Terrace is located 300 meters to the north of the Bayon and runs parallel to the central road. The construction is approximately 400 meters long and is easily accessible from the main road running through the Angkor Thom Complex. In fact one of the best things about this site, when it comes to sightseeing, is that there's no restriction on viewing times. Go in the early morning when then crowds haven't arrived and it's still cool.

History: The site was built by King Jayavarman 7th as a viewing platform and as such, has a central stairway to its upper level. Most sightseers will walk the entire length, as a matter of interest, but the most compelling viewing is the ornate artwork at the northern and southern ends of the structure.

Elephant Statues: While the walls at both ends have a good amount of ornate carving and artwork, the main features of the site are the elephant carvings which protrude from the extended viewing platforms. On the very end of the section is three life-size stone carvings of Elephant heads and trunks.



Life size stone elephants



The Elephant Terrace

THE BAYON - ANGKOR THOM COMPLEX

About: Considered as one of the big three at the Angkor Archaeological Park, the Bayon certainly has its own unique and distinct architecture created by the labyrinth of four faced stupas on the upper gallery. According to Wikipedia the Bayon was constructed during the reign of Jayavarman the 7th and there is a striking similarity between his own face, and that of the smiling faces of the structure.

All Seeing God: Another theory regarding the four faced stupa's is it's a representation of an all seeing god (seeing in all directions) looking out from the centre of the universe. **Click the link below for more in-depth info about the Bayon:**

WIKIPEDIA

Photography: If you want to get some good pictures there's a couple of things to consider. The first is if you decide to go in the morning you need to be there when the site first opens (0730 AM) to beat the tour group hordes, which generally arrive at around 0830 AM. You have no more than an hour in the softer morning light before the flow of bodies through



A Smiling Face

the labyrinth makes it a waste of time trying to get good shots. For some nice afternoon shots be at the site at 3 PM as the sun will fully illuminate the western side. You can avoid the crowds by staying outside and using a tripod and a telephoto lens. **Click the link below for directions from Side Walk Hotel to the Bayon:**



The Upper Level of the Bayon

THE BAYON - PHOTOS & VIDEO



Click the link to the right to see video highlights of THE BAYON:



THE GATES - ANGKOR THOM COMPLEX

South Gate: Is the most used entrance into the Angkor Thom complex. It also a popular sightseeing attraction in its own right, particularly in the late afternoon and at sunset. The bridge across the moat has a line of large heads on each side which add to the beauty of the site. This is a nice place to get some sunset shots. For those who are interested, there's also the option of taking a joy-ride on an elephant. The South Gate is a good spot to get some shade and a cold drink after sight-seeing within the Angkor Thom Complex.

Note: In years past it was possible to climb up to the top of the wall (from the inner side) to get a closer look at the heads of South Gate. This practice has now been stopped; there are signs prohibiting ascents to the top of the wall.

Gate of The Dead: Also known as the EAST GATE, the Gate Of The Dead is the least visited of all the gates at the Angkor Thom site. This is probably due to it being at the end of a dead end dirt track. Unlike the other gates, there's no continuing road.



Once you pass through, the terrain drops away to a creek. Photo opportunities are limited due to the gate being in shade, from the thick surrounding foliage, for most of the day. The site is worth a visit if you want a bit of peace and quiet away from the tourist hordes clambering over all the other Angkor Thom sites. **Click the link below for directions:**



SRA SRANG SUNRISE TOUR

Sra Srang Sunrise Tour: This is a multi-site tour which takes in three sites (which are uncrowded and don't have set viewing times). Start with a sunrise viewing over SRA SRANG Barray, then move onto the VICTORY GATE (along the eastern wall of Angkor Thom). After the Victory Gate, head straight into the Angkor Thom Complex to check out the TERRACE OF ELEPHANTS.

Srah Srang: The Srah Srang Lake and viewpoint is an alternate sunrise location for those who don't wish to mix it with the crowds at the Angkor Wat sunrise pond. While it probably isn't as impressive as the more renowned Angkor Wat sunrise, it's still a great spectacle with colourful reflections over the lake. Try to get to the sunrise viewpoint by around 5.15 AM to see the dawn colours as the sun approaches the horizon. This is an off the beaten track location (no hordes of noisy tour groups) and well worth the effort if you want to avoid crowds. [Click the link below for directions:](#)



Victory Gate: Situated on the eastern boundary wall of Angkor Thom this is one of the less visited sites. Having visited all of the gates at Angkor Thom I can say reliably that only this gate and the South Gate are viable photography options. This is because the approach bridges to both gates are not enshrouded by tree growth. [Click the link below for directions from Sra Srang:](#)



PRE RUP SUNRISE TOUR

Pre Rup Sunrise Tour: This is a multi-site tour which takes in two excellent sites: PRE RUP TEMPLE and THE TA PRHOM. Note: The Ta Phrom site is one of the big three and accordingly, has set visiting hours - 07.30 AM to 18.00 PM.

Pre Rup: This is one of the temple sites which could possibly be considered being off the beaten track. Probably because it's on the outskirts of the Angkor Archaeological Park and most either don't have time for it or it's too far to travel. This site is an excellent sunrise location due to the small numbers visiting, the beauty of the surrounding jungle, and the colours of the stonework as the sun comes over the horizon. There is a quiet serenity about this site which you may not find at most of the other more well-known sites. If you can organise it, take a flask of tea or coffee with you. Then sit back and enjoy the moment as the sun comes up. **Click the link below for directions from the Side Walk Hotel:**



Climb to the Top: An added bonus of taking in a sunrise at Pre Rup is you can climb the stairs to the upper platform, and get a nice view of the surrounding countryside. There are six towers protruding vertically from the upper platform, and a number of lion sentinels looking out over the landscape. **Click the link below to get from Pre Rup to Ta Prohm:**



TA PROHM SIGHTSEEING

Ta Prohm: This site is one of the most interesting due to the entangled tree roots among the ruins. It's also a bit further away than Angkor Wat and Angkor Thom so allow enough time if you're planning to visit later in the afternoon. **Note:** Closing time is 5.30 pm. There are two entrances to the site; east and west. However, the western entrance is the easier to travel to and the temple is much closer to the entry gate. **Note:** the eastern gate has a 500 meter walk before arriving at the temple structure. **Click the link below for directions from the Side Walk Hotel:**



Doing the tour: Once the gates open, you'll only have an hour of peaceful sightseeing before the tour groups begin arriving. To check-out some of the lesser known attractions within the temple, hire one of the security people (who also double as very knowledgeable guides) for USD 3.00. They will take you off the main route and point out some hidden gems in the lesser known nooks and crannies of the site.



Hidden Gems

Photography: For best photography results go in the morning, before the group tours arrive, or in the late afternoon. The group tours have normally departed by 16.00 PM and the less crowded atmosphere offers a better opportunity for uninterrupted shooting. In the late afternoon the sun casts a golden hue over many of the tree trunks and roots growing among the stonework.



Entangled Tree Roots

TA PROHM - PHOTOS & VIDEO



Click the link to the right to see video highlights of the TA PROHM:



THE PREAH KHAN GRAND TOUR

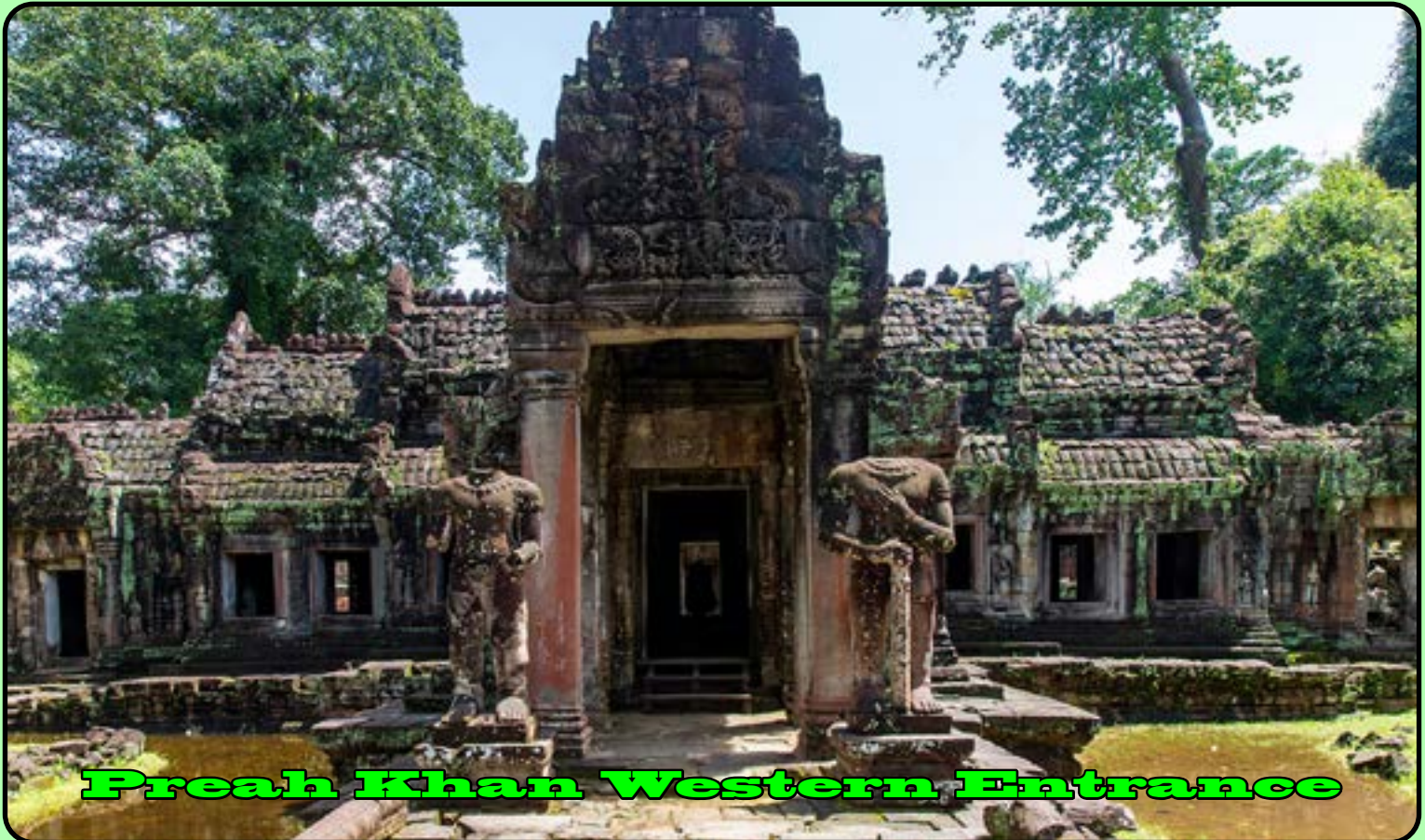
About: Preah Khan Temple is an interesting and lesser visited site, just to the north of the Angkor Thom complex. However, if you plan on checking it out allow enough time to visit two other sites nearby which are part of the same complex. The following is a suggested itinerary to visit PREAH KHAN, NEAK POUN and TA SOM in a single outing. Ideally, arrange your visit in the afternoon so you can end the tour at Neak Poun to be able to see the sunset from the Baray walkway.

Getting there: If you've got your own transportation, the best way to get there simply ride all the way through the Angkor Thom complex and exit through the northern gate. Follow the road around to the right and you'll eventually come to a parking area (on the left) which is opposite the western entrance to Preah Khan Temple.

Note: there's three entrances to this site. However, the other two are further along the same road. **Click the following ink for directions from the Side Walk Hotel:**



Neak Poun



Preah Khan Western Entrance

PREAH KHAN TEMPLE

Unique Features: Preah Khan is one of the larger temples in the Angkor complex and it has a couple of unique features, not seen at any of the other sites. From the western entrance there's a short walkway to the outer wall of the temple complex. The entry doorway, on the outer wall, leads directly into a long tunnel (infinity tunnel) which runs all the way through the structure to the eastern gate. There's also a shorter north to south tunnel, which intersects the east to west one, at the exact mid-point of the structure. It's at this intersection where you can see one of the unique features of the site. A stupa sits at the intersection of the two tunnels. If you stand back a few meters (on the east to west tunnel) you'll see what appears to be a flame at the tip of the stupa. This is created by a hole in the stonework above (in the shape of a flame) which allows external light into the darkened interior.

The Queens Room: In the northeastern corner of the complex there's a structure which resembles Roman or Egyptian architecture. It is known as the Queens Room and is



Stupa with flame

quite unique with its rows of rounded columns. It's something which isn't seen in any of the other structures in the Angkor Archaeological Park.

Next stop: Ta Som Temple should be the next stop on this suggested itinerary. It is located at the opposite end of the large pond. **Click the following link for directions to Ta Som:**



The Queens Room

TA SOM TEMPLE

About: As mentioned, Ta Som Temple should be the next stop on this suggested itinerary. The site is at the eastern end of the large Baray, and directly opposite to the Preah Khan site. The Ta Som Temple is smaller in size than Preah Khan, but it has a lot of ornate artworks (Apsara Dancers) on it's walls. The site has been described as a cross between the Bayon and the Ta Prohm. Largely due to the four-sided heads adorning its entry gates and the trees growing into the stonework. **Click the following link for more in-depth information:**

WIKIPEDIA

Central Area: This area contains most of the artwork. Although a lot of the structure is in ruins, there is still plenty of artwork to be seen on the remaining walls. The red stone combined with the green moss gives it a striking coloration.

Final stop: The next (and final) stop on this suggested itinerary is Neak Poun. **Click the following link for directions:**

Google Maps



NEAK POUN TEMPLE ISLAND

Neak Poun: This is another interesting and less visited temple site, in the middle of a large Baray (man-made pond). The temple is on an island which is accessed from the northern side of the Baray, via a boarded walkway. The entry point to the walkway is at the mid-point of the northern side of the Baray. Opening hours are 0730 - 1730.

On-site: There's a secure parking area with local restaurants, drink sellers and rest rooms across the road from the entrance. You can park your motorbike here and head across to the entry checkpoint. The park staff on duty will check to see if your Angkor Pass is current, before granting entry.

The Baray: The boarded walkway is approximately 500 meters in length and provides excellent views across the Baray, to the east and west. There's a viewing point in the middle where you can get some great photos, particularly at sunset when there's some nice coloration being reflected of the surface of the pond.

The Island: This is the central feature of Neak Poun Baray. The walkway takes you onto an island at the center of the lake which in



The walkway

turn, has another small pond within. This feature is quite remarkable as it's obvious, from the shape and layout, it's a man-made construction. There is a path around the edge of this internal pond which allows you to get closer to the smaller stone structures protruding from the water.

Walkway sunset: The site closes at 5.30 pm however, for those on the walkway after this time, you're allowed until 6.00 pm to clear the site. On the way you can get some memorable sunset shots across the lake, from the walkway.



The Pond on the Central Island

BANTAEY SREI SIGHTSEEING

Bantaey Srei: This is a small site with ornate, red coloured stonework, located 37 kilometres from Siem Reap Township. If you travel out in a tuk-tuk or motorbike, be prepared for a run time of an hour each way. Due to the distance this also tends to be an afternoon site so, once again, buck the trend and go early in the morning.

Note: If you travel by Charles DE Gaulle and NR 67, you'll go right past the PRE RUP TEMPLE site. If you start early you can watch the sunrise at Pre Rup and then continue on to Bantaey Srei. **Click the link below for directions from the Sidewalk Hotel:**



Red Sandstone: According to Wikipedia, the red sandstone used in the construction of the Bantaey Srei Temple comes from the Khorat Plateau, in Thailand. The buildings are miniature in scale, unusually so when measured by the standards of Angkorian construction. These factors have made the temple extremely popular with tourists, and have led to its being widely praised as a "precious gem", or the "jewel of Khmer art".



Bantaey Srei Temple

PHNOM KULEN NATIONAL PARK

About: Phnom Kulen National Park is located approximately forty-five kilometers north of the Siem Reap. The national park is predominantly a sandstone, jungle covered peak, which runs northeast to southwest. It's the only elevated geographical feature in the area and can be seen from a considerable distance, owing to the surrounding flat landscape of endless rice paddies. The primary sightseeing attractions, within the national park, are waterfalls, viewpoints, and several ancient Khmer sites.

Getting there: If you have your transportation (rented motorbike) then getting to the park entry point is straight forward. The roads are sealed all the way and don't pose any difficulties. However, once you enter (go beyond the boom gate) the road becomes more degraded and most of it, at the top of the plateau, is red dirt. In the dry season, this isn't an issue. The rainy season is a different story though. From June to October, much of this road becomes a muddy, red bog. If you're inexperienced in riding over mud tracks on a motorbike, it might be better to go on an organised tour in a 4 x 4 vehicle. **Click the following link for directions from the Sidewalk Hotel:**



Entry fees: The entry fee to the national park for foreigners is 20 USD, which makes the fees for National Parks in neighbouring countries (Thailand) seem cheap in comparison. From the boom gate a sealed road winds up to the top of the mountain, from which point it changes to red dirt. **NOTE:** A map at the park ticket office shows a spiderweb of roads, along the top of the plateau, leading to a considerable number of sightseeing attractions. During the rainy season, without an off-road bike, or 4 x 4 vehicle, there's no hope of getting to the more distant ones - over twenty kilometers of dirt road - on a Honda scooter. These more remote locations are best traveled to in the dry season.



PHNOM KULEN NATIONAL PARK

The Amazing Cliff: The first easy stop on the sightseeing circuit was a location called "the amazing cliff." This is essentially a sandstone cliff line, providing views across the surrounding jungle covered terrain, just one hundred meters from the road. At the end of the rainy season, when everything is green and vibrant, it's a picturesque landscape and well worth a thirty-minute stop. **Click the following link for directions from the park entry point (ticket office):**



The Cascading Waterfalls: From the amazing cliff, the next major sightseeing stop is the "cascading waterfalls," some eight km further on from the amazing cliff. **Note:** Getting there, during the rainy season, is a real challenge. However, it's well worth the effort as the waterfall looks spectacular in peak flow. **Click the following link for directions from the amazing cliff:**



The Amazing Viewpoint

PHNOM KULEN NATIONAL PARK

On-site: As mentioned, the waterfall site - called the **cascading waterfalls** - in peak flow is well worth the effort of getting to. However, it's an absolute tourist trap with restaurants, hawker's stalls, and drink sellers everywhere on the path down to the falls. A properly constructed pathway leads down a series of levels to the primary waterfall at the bottom of a long stairway. At the bottom the volume of water coming over the falls (in the rainy season) is impressive. A boarded walkway allows sightseers to get closer to the face of the falls

There are other sightseeing attractions around the cascading waterfall. A site called the "one thousand Linga's" is just a few hundred meters away. This, apparently, is where one thousand phallic symbols had been carved into the stone bed of a small river. Unfortunately, the high flow of water in the rainy season makes it difficult to see anything. A visit in the dry season will certainly make it possible to get to more sightseeing attractions. The downside of a dry season visit being the waterfalls will be far less spectacular.



At the bottom of the stairway

PHNOM KULEN - PHOTOS & VIDEO



The Cascading Waterfall

Click the link to the right to see video highlights of PHNOM KULEN:



The Amazing Viewpoint

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